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Trevor Burns 'Touches Down' at Home Base

By CHARLES B. CAMP

Trevor B. Burns is home.

The 43-year-old Syracusan, who spent two weeks last month in Cuba after his light plane crashed into the Caribbean Sea, arrived about 6:45 p.m. yesterday at Hancock Airport aboard the same light plane which ferried him out of Cuba last Sunday.

Burns was met at the Flight Service terminal by his wife, Annette, his 11-month-old son Todd, and a battery of newsmen and photographers.

He arrived aboard a blue-and-white Cessna 180, with "Cuban Special" painted on the side. The single engine, two-seat plane is similar to the one in

which Burns crashed Feb. 16. Flying Burns in was Alvin Lafleur of Miramar, Fla., his employer, long-time friend and the same pilot who brought him into West Hollywood, Fla., a week ago.

After being reunited with his wife, Burns, who has been away from Syracuse some seven months, said the first thing he intended to do was "make some money."

"I'm broke," he declared. "I lost everything I owned when my plane went down." Burns remarked that he owned the plane, which sank in 800 feet of water 75 miles off the southern coast of Cuba.

The only thing Burns brought back to Syracuse with him was his wrist watch, which he said

kept running all the time he was afloat in the sea.

Burns fought off sharks for 28 hours before he finally stumbled onto a coral reef and was rescued by the Cuban navy.

At various times, Burns said, he saw nine sharks, but was able to keep from being attacked by putting his head below water and watching them so they couldn't get behind him. His only weapon was a pocket knife.

"A friend once told me to keep my head under the water and my eyes open if I ever landed in shark-infested waters," Burns said. He added that he thought at times he must have held his breath for two minutes before finally coming up for air.

Among the horrors of his ordeal were lapses of memory and hallucinations. "I saw people, phantoms and automobiles in the water," he declared. He was unable to sleep at all, he said. He used a yellow Mae West-type life preserver to keep himself afloat.

When questioned about hunger, Burns quipped, "I wasn't worrying about eating; I was worried about being eaten." He suffered from sunburn and exposure after being rescued, but otherwise was said to be in good health.

"My feet (which were painfully swollen several days) are now all right," Burns declared, "but I lost three layers of skin off my legs," he added, pointing to some healing areas on his calf.

Burns said he will remain at his 716 Westcott St. home until tomorrow, when he and Lafleur will fly to New York City, where Burns has a network television engagement on Wednesday. He said he would then return to Syracuse.

Lafleur, who is in the outdoor amusement business, commented that he expected Burns to return to work for him when he opens a fair in the New York area later this month.

Burns again confirmed that he had a box of Havana cigars for Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller and a confidential message from "an influential" Cuban to give to the governor. He also joked that Lafleur had a box of cigars for Goldwater.

Burns declined to discuss the message for Rockefeller, saying that it was given to him in confidence. He denied it concerned arrangements for a talk between Rockefeller and Castro. He says he expects to be contacted by the governor's office when Rockefeller can see him.

Burns also claimed that his previous remarks on his stay in Cuba were distorted, and last night related a somewhat different version of the story he told newsmen immediately after arriving on U.S. soil last Sunday evening.

"The Cuban people are definitely not happy," Burns said. "There is lots of hunger and famine, and they are cramming Communism down the throats of the youngsters."

Burns had previously said he was surprised by his peek into Cuba, and asserted it was not the Cuba he had read and heard about. He claimed at that time he saw no anti-American slogans or signs, found Cuban shops relatively well stocked with the basic necessities of life, and described the Cuban people as "determined to find happiness and security."

During his week in Florida Burns stayed with Lafleur. He reportedly went into "delayed shock" Wednesday after going over everything he saw and did in Cuba with representatives of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Lafleur said Burns was placed under sedation on doctor's orders that night.